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## THE DAY'S WORK IN HOBOKEN

By ASA DON DICKINSON, A. L. A. *Dispatch Agent, Hoboken, N. J.*

Our days at the Hoboken Dispatch Office are full of interest and incident. Starting in January with one, we now occupy four of the pleasantest saloons in a town which has ever been famous both for barrooms and Germans. We are but one block back from the water front. The *Leviathan* docks just around the corner. Daily an intermittent stream of very sober looking soldiers passes our door. They are on the long trail which in another moment will bring their feet to the gangplank of a transport.

But we cannot afford to gaze long at the surroundings. The day's work at Hoboken means that 6,000 books must be sent overseas and this involves a good deal of hard work. 6,000 a day means 750 an hour, twelve a minute, one every five seconds. If 6,000 books are to be dispatched daily, 6,000 must be received, acknowledged, unpacked and prepared for shipment daily. They come in lots of all sizes, from a single "Baedeker" up to 20,000 books at once. Ten per cent are purchased books, and these entail ordering and bill checking. They come in all sorts of ways: by quartermaster's freight, by freight prepaid, by freight collect, by express prepaid, by express collect, by parcel post, by moving-van, wagon or limousine, by lighter and by hand. They come with all sorts of addresses, they come in every possible sort of package—nearly 100 packages a day, which should all receive attention on the day of their arrival, for the next day will bring as many more. The books must all be carefully inspected of course, and a certain number of "unsuitables" will have to be disposed of. The very large majority of books which pass inspection must be roughly classified, and each must contain one bookplate, book-pocket, and book card bearing the author's surname and a brief title. (Bless-

ings on the librarian who sees that the books he sends us are *carefully* prepared for shipment. The shelf-list card is *not* required in our work. Coöperating friends, all please take notice if you would save useless labor.) After the books are made up into carefully proportioned little libraries of about seventy-five volumes each, they are packed in our regulation shipping bookcases. In each box are placed directions to the amateur librarians who are to care for the books overseas. And finally there is the sealing, stenciling and shipping of the boxes. Some are for use on the transports and later "over there"; some for cargo shipment as part of 50 tons a month asked for by General Pershing; some are for shipment to one or other of the Naval Bases; or to the Red Cross; or to some particular ship in local waters. About 80 boxes go out each day. Ninety-nine, 7,425 books, is the one-day record so far. Each should bear three pasted labels and on the average five stencilings. Our stencil library is surprisingly large. If a box is wrongly marked it will *surely* go astray. In the midst of the hurly-burly over there we cannot but fear it may do so any way.

Suppose we note the events of a busy hour or so at 119 Hudson street:

8:15 a.m.—The dispatch agent arrives, to find a truck waiting to be loaded for the piers. Porters and truckmen are enjoying a cozy social hour.

8:16—The dynamo begins to buzz, galvanizing porters and truckmen into more or less strenuous action.

8:20—Morning mail arrives: 25 letters and 50 pounds of newspapers and periodicals.

8:25—Truck arrives with load of 50 cases of books received per quartermaster's freight—five lots in the load—two lots are "short" one case apiece.

- 8:30—Parcel post wagon arrives with 27 parcels: books from publishers, libraries and individuals, and supplies from headquarters.
- 8:35—A limousine stops before the door and an early-rising Lady Bountiful enters bearing three issues of the *Saturday Evening Post*, and one copy each of Owen Meredith's "Lucile," Irving's "Sketch-book," Mitchell's "Reveries of a bachelor," Drummond's "Natural law in the spiritual world," and "Mr. Britling." She naturally wishes to know all about how we send books to soldiers, and holds the dispatch agent in gracious social converse for seven precious minutes, till
- 8:42—An irate policeman enters to say traffic on Hudson street is completely blocked by vehicles standing before our premises.
- 8:45—Loaded truck departs for the pier, and the traffic begins to trickle through the jam.
- 8:50—A big express wagon arrives to clog things up again, and at 8:50½ comes a giant "seagoing" motor truck nine hours out from Philadelphia with 185 of our shipping bookcases.
- 8:51—Three newly hired porters take a good look at this load; then two of them remember that they have been drafted and must leave "for the front" at once; the third candidly states that the work is too hard for him.
- 8:52—Telephone bell rings: "One hundred eight boxes of books are lying on Pier 1. They have just come off a lighter from Cheyenne, Wyoming. They weigh about 300 pounds apiece. I suppose they belong to you folks. The major says to tell you they must be taken away before noon, or he will dispose of them as he sees fit."
- 8:53—Telegram from Washington headquarters: "Congratulations on your last weekly report. Kindly arrange to double your output next week and hereafter."
- 8:54—Wagon arrives with load of packing boxes.
- 8:55—Another telegram from Washington headquarters: "Use only our standard shipping bookcases. Discontinue at once all use of packing boxes."
- 8:56—Telegram from manufacturer of standard shipping bookcases: "Can't get labor or lumber. Don't expect any more boxes for at least a week."
- 8:58—Distinguished librarian of leisurely habits and a fine conversational talent arrives to inspect our work.
- 9:00—Class of Y. M. C. A. transport secretaries arrives to receive instruction in the care and administration of our transport libraries.
- 9:10—Red Cross chaplain enters with an urgent demand for "Lady Audley's secret." "There is a boy in St. Mary's hospital who must at once have that book and no other."
- 9:15—Read letter from headquarters: The gist is as follows: "Don't stick so close to your office. Get out, man, and cultivate diplomatic relations with admirals and major generals."
- 9:16—Wire from headquarters: "Please release your first assistant." (He had already gone to Boston to establish dispatch office there.)
- 9:20—Base hospital chaplain enters with a list of 450 titles. He tells us that he has selected them with great care, and hopes there need be no substitutions. They must be on board his ship at 9 a. m. tomorrow. She sails at noon. He doesn't know her name or number or whether she sails from New York, Brooklyn or Hoboken.
- 9:21—Quartermaster's truck arrives with load of Burleson magazines.
- 9:23—Three loud explosions in rapid succession on the water front. Many windows are broken by the concussion. All hands rush into the street. German woman from delicatessen shop next door, in hysterics, demands first aid treatment. She gets it—good old-fashioned cold water.
- 9:25—Moving van arrives with load of 8,000 loose, unsorted books, collected by the New York Public Library.

- 9:27—Secondhand packing box dealer arrives to take away old boxes, and dealer in old paper arrives for a load of discarded books.
- 9:28—Military authorities threaten drastic action if we continue to block traffic in Hudson street. A string of 75 quarter-master trucks is being held up.
- 9:29—Sell two copies of "The Four Million," first editions, to a book dealer for \$60.00.
- 9:30—Long distance telephone from Washington headquarters: "Our representatives abroad report very few books arriving in France. Why is this?"
- 9:31—Director of Library War Service concludes an unobtrusive visit of inspection by saying a few kind words as to the progress we are making, and by advising us not to overwork.
- 9:32—The dispatch agent falls heavily to the floor. He has fainted.

## GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE WAR

By H. H. B. MEYER, *Chief Bibliographer, Library of Congress*

An attempt to review, in the course of an hour, the output of the largest printing establishment in the world, during the period of its greatest activity, must necessarily appear somewhat absurd. One of my colleagues with a mathematical turn of mind has estimated that it would take fifty-six hours steady reading to merely peruse the Monthly Catalogue of public documents. Obviously an enormous exclusion must be practiced and but few documents can be passed in review. But what is to be the basis of exclusion or inclusion? Again obviously present usefulness. This is neither the time nor the occasion in which to attempt an appraisal of documents as records of past events. That is rather the business of the future historian after time has performed its slow but sure winnowing. But this is the time and place to attempt to point out what documents are of the most use in helping the ordinary citizen, who is the special care of the modern librarian, to perform his part in the war.

In the treatment of the material itself two courses lie open, either to take it up by subject or by issuing office. The latter has been selected because an arrangement by issuing office after all parallels to a great extent an arrangement by subject, while it affords a readier means of identification. I shall pass in rapid review, then,

the publications which have been issued by the permanent departments of the government, followed by those of the special departments and bureaus brought into existence by the exigencies of the war.

### State Department

To begin with the State Department: Apart from the routine publications there stands out prominently the "Diplomatic correspondence with belligerent governments relating to neutral rights and duties." A fourth part was published in May of this year, bringing the documents down to the declaration of war against Germany, April 6, 1917, and the severance of diplomatic relations with Austria-Hungary and Turkey, April 8 and 23, respectively. It covers the whole of the submarine controversy to its final consummation. This is perhaps the most valuable contribution of source material so far made to the history of the war. Although a plain, straightforward presentation of documents, it is an absolute indictment, and such an array of evidence as forces a conviction of the utterly stupid perfidy of the governments of the Central powers, which made it impossible for the United States to remain out of the war. Its value to patriotic speakers should not be overlooked. Many of the facts which form the basis of their arguments and appeals rest on the evidence here presented.